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Istook, Biotech Leaders Meet in OKC

Oklahoma City, OK - Oklahoma City's growing biotech industry could be getting bigger. Today Rep. Istook (R - Warr Acres) is hosting the president and CEO of BIO (Biotechnical Industry Organization), the nation's leading biotechnology organization, to visit with local leaders and boost the expansion of research and technology in Oklahoma.

President and CEO Jim Greenwood, a former colleague of Istook's in Congress, is making the visit at Istook's invitation.

"Oklahoma's biotech sector has seen rapid growth, with public-private partnerships I've helped to develop," said Rep. Istook. "As I've told Jim Greenwood on multiple occasions, a visit here will help companies understand that we're a great place to expand their biotechnology operations."

Istook and Greenwood met on Wednesday with a large number of key persons in Oklahoma's biotech sector, and Greenwood on Thursday will further tour local biotech facilities. (Istook, however, must return to Washington on Thursday.)

Istook has led the efforts to expand federal and private research dollars in Oklahoma. A major example of his federal involvement is growth of the Institutional Development Award (IDeA) program run by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Istook helped restructure the program in a way that now brings tens of millions of dollars each year to Oklahoma for research.

"When I first came to Congress the IDeA program was funded at less than a million dollars. Now the program receives over \$220 million annually, with Oklahoma capturing tens of millions of dollars in research grants each year," said Istook. "This new industry brought with it many of the best-paying jobs in the state. Oklahoma is now a top contender both within the IDeA program and also for other NIH research grants."

"Congressman Istook was the central reason the IDeA funding increased to more than \$220 million today," said Dr. J. Donald Capra, president of the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation. "He understood early on that putting federal research dollars in Oklahoma not only increased our chances of finding cures and opening the door of discovery on diseases, but that biomedical research in Oklahoma is a bargain."

"Oklahoma is producing medical breakthroughs at a fraction of the cost it can be done in California or New York. Ernest has provided strong leadership to both achieve medical innovation and save taxpayers money."

